

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4234

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 NICOSIA 2516

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FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR LE

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FRANJIEH AND CHAMOUN

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY:

PRESIDENT FRANJIEH, JOINED BY FORMER PRESIDENT CHAMOUN, RECEIVED US AT THE MOUNTAIN HOME OF FRANJIEH'S CONFIDENT AND SON-IN-LAW, LUCIEN DAHDAH, WHO SERVED AS INTERPRETER DURING THE MORE CRITICAL POINTS OF OUR CONVERSATION. IN TERMS OF SUBSTANCE, THIS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CONVERSATION OF OUR VISITS TO LEBANON, AND THE CONCERTED VIEWS OF TWO OF THE THREE MOST POWERFUL CHRISTIAN LEADERS GIVES IT ADDED SIGNIFICANCE. WE ARE THUS REPORTING IT IN SOME DETAIL. THE MAIN THRUST OF FRANJIEH'S PRESENTATION WAS A COMPLAINT OF OUR INATTENTION AND LACK OF CONSTANCY. THE PHRASING WAS TOUGH AND THE TONE WAS SOMETIMES ANGRY. OUR OTHER CONVERSATIONS WILL BE COVERED BY SUBSEQUENT CABLES SUMMARIZING THE MAIN THEMES OF OUR TALKS.

2. AT THE OUTSET OF THE MEETING, I SPOKE FROM THE TALKING POINTS WHICH YOU APPROVED. FRANJIEH THEN WENT ON THE OFFENSIVE. HE WISHED, HE SAID, THAT THE PURPOSE OF OUR VISIT HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED AS MEETING WITH THE "LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT" RATHER THAN WITH "CHRISTIAN LEADERS." HE NOTED THAT THE LATE AMBASSADOR MELOY SPENT TWO MONTHS

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"SEEING EVERYBODY BUT THE LEGITIMATE LEADERS." (FROM OTHER

SOURCES, WE KNOW HE REACTED IN THE SAME WAY TO THE SEELYE MISSION.) NEEDLESS TO SAY, I TOOK STRONG ISSUE, POINTING OUT THAT MELOY'S DISCRETION IN VISITING LEADERS IN THE CHRISTIAN-HELD AREA WAS DICTATED PURELY BY SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. FRANJIEH RETORTED THAT THE REASONS WERE MORE LIKELY POLITICAL AND NOTED THAT MELOY WAS ON HIS WAY TO MEET WITH SARKIS, NOT WITH HIMSELF. PERHAPS, SUGGESTED FRANJIEH, WE HAD DECIDED THAT LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY HAD COLLAPSED.

3. FRANJIEH STATED THAT THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO AMBASSADOR BROWN AND HAD NOT CHANGED. HE NOTED THAT WHEN BROWN ASKED HIM HOW LONG THE CHRISTIANS CAN LAST, HE HAD REPLIED "UNTIL DEATH." BROWN THEN OFFERED, ACCORDING TO FRANJIEH, A PLAN FOR A CONSORTIUM OF ARAB AND WESTERN NATIONS WHICH WOULD HELP BOTH WITH THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON AND WITH THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY. THE NATIONAL FRONT (CHRISTIAN LEADERS) READILY ACCEPTED THE "BROWN PLAN." FRANJIEH THEN DESCRIBED HOW BROWN, AFTER GOING TO WASHINGTON, RETURNED TO SAY THAT WE SHOULD DISREGARD HIS PROPOSALS. THE NATIONAL FRONT, HOWEVER, STANDS BY THE THREE-PART SOLUTION OF A POLITICAL TRUCE WHICH RESPECTS THE CAIRO ACCORD, A CONSORTIUM FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND ANOTHER FOR SECURITY. (COMMENT: IT WAS CLEAR THAT WHATEVER THE REALITY OF THE "BROWN PLAN," FRANJIEH WILL STICK TO HIS VERSION.)

4. ON THE MILITARY SIDE, FRANJIEH CONTINUED, THE ADVANTAGE TURNED TO THE CHRISTIANS AFTER SYRIA CHANGED ITS POSITION. SYRIA IS NOW COMMITTED TO HELP MAINTAIN LEBANESE SECURITY UNTIL THE PALESTINIANS STOP PREVENTING PEACE AND UNTIL INTERNAL STABILITY IS RESTORED. IT HAS BEEN SIX MONTHS NOW, ADDED FRANJIEH, SINCE SYRIA MADE ANY DEMANDS ON CHRISTIAN LEBANON. HE ADDEPTS ASAD'S UNILATERAL COMMITMENT TO STAY THE COURSE OF THE PACIFICATION PROCESS. ASAD, AFTER TEN MONTHS OF AID TO THE PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST SIDE, WAS FINALLY PERSUADED BY CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE THAT SYRIA'S INTERESTS REQUIRED A NEW POLICY TO PREVENT THE LEBANESE CONFLICT FROM FLOWING OVER SYRIA'S BORDERS.

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5. FRANJIEH MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE CHIEF GOAL OF THE CHRISTIANS IS TO END THE PALESTINIAN ROLE IN LEBANESE POLITICS. THEY WILL INSIST UPON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS WITH SOME CLARIFICATIONS FAVORABLE TO THEIR SIDE. FOR EXAMPLE, FRANJIEH'S POSITION WITH RESPECT TO PALESTININIANS WHO ENTERED LEBANON SINCE 1969 IS THAT THEY ARE NOT COVERED BY THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND MUST LEAVE THE

COUNTRY. LIGHT ARMS TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY WITHIN THE CAMPS WOULD BE PERMITTED, BUT ONLY IN AGREEMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. FRANJIEH ADDED THAT HE HAD OBTAINED SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO THESE CLARIFICATIONS OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS.

6. FRANJIEH SAID THAT THE APLESTINIAN OBJECTIVE WAS TO MAINTAIN THEIR PRESENT POSITION IN LEBANON AND, PERHAPS, TURN THE COUNTRY INTO A SOVIET SATELLITE. CAHMOUN AND FRANJIEH DWELT AT LENGTH UPON THE SUPPORT THE PALESTINIANS RECEIVE FROM THE SOVIET UNION, IRAQ AND LIBYA. AID FROM THE LATTER TWO STATES IS BECOMING A SERIOUS PROBLEM. THERE ARE NOW, SAID CHAMOUN, A TOTAL OF 1,000 IRAQIS IN LEBANON, WITH 6,000 AS THEIR PLANNED FORCE LEVEL. TWO IRAQI COMPANIES AND LATE MODEL SOVIET TANKS WERE USED IN THE RECENT FIGHTING IN SHIYAH (EASTERN PART OF WESTERN BEIRUT), ACCORDING TO INFORMATION DEVELOPED BY INTERROGATING TWO IRAQI PRISONERS. AT THE TWO AIRPORTS BEING BUILT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, THERE ARE, ACCORDING TO UNCONFIRMED REPORTS, SIXTEEN F-1 MIRAGE FIGHTERS IN CRATES AWAITING ASSEMBLY WITH THE HELP OF FRENCH COMMUNIST TECHNICIANS. THIS IS THE KIND OF BACKING, NOTED CHAMOUN, WHICH MAKES JUMBLATT SO CONFIDENT.

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FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

7. FRANJIEH THEN TURNED TO THE UNITED STATES. "FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE MODERN HISTORY OF THE U.S. WE SEE THE US STANDING WITH ARMS FOLDED, NEUTRAL IN THE FACE OF INTERVENTION BY THE SOVIET UNION IN A FRIENDLY COUNTRY."

AFTER POINTING OUT WHAT WE HAD DONE IN AID OF A SETTLEMENT, WE ASKED WHAT FURTHER ASSISTANCE THEY HAD IN MIND. THE PRESIDENT EXPLAINED THAT IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL TO LEBANON IF THE US WOULD PRESSURE SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT, THE GULF STATES AND EGYPT TO HALT ALL FINANCIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO THE PALESTINIANS IF ANY SUCH AID IS USED AGAINST LEBANON. IN THE MILITARY AREA, LEBANON HAS ALWAYS RELIED ON THE US AND FRANCE TO COME TO THE AID OF LEBANON IN CASE OF AGGRESSION. AS IT HAPPENED, LEBANON WAS NEARLY DESTROYED BUT SURVIVED THROUGH ITS SELF-RELIANCE. FORMER AMBASSADOR BUFFUM, FRANJIH CLAIMED, HAD PROMISED THAT THE US "WOULD EMPTY ITS MILITARY STORES IN THE CASE OF AGGRESSION. IN FACT, LEBANON HAS NOT RECEIVED A SINGLE CARTRIDGE." WITH RISING VOICE FRANJIH EXCLAIMED, "WE DID NOT SEEK THE SIXTH FLEET OR MARINES, BUT YOU RECENTLY SENT BOTH TO KOREA BECAUSE OF A QUARREL OVER A TREE*"

8. FRANJIH OPINIONED THAT THE USG ATTITUDE TOWARD LEBANON WAS BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT IT WAS A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT, BETWEEN RICH AND POOR. THE PROBLEM, HE CLAIMED, NEVER WAS A SOCIAL ONE. HE ARGUED THAT LEBANON'S RECORD IN TERMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE WAS
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9. AS TO THE QUESTION OF PARTITION, FRANJIH DESCRIBED IT AS A DANGER IF THE PALESTINIANS WHO HAVE ENTERED SINCE 1969 DO NOT DEPART. BUT, HE CLAIMED, PARTITION HAS NEVER BEEN AN OBJECTIVE OF LEBANON'S LEADERS AND HE WONDERED WHY THE USG MADE SUCH A POINT OF OPPOSING IT. CHAMOUN CHIMED IN TO SAY THAT THE QUESTION OF PARTITION IS "ACADEMIC". NOBODY IS FOR PARTITION UNLESS LEBANON IS TO BE STUCK WITH ARMED PALESTINIANS FOREVER.

10 IN BIDDING ME FAREWELL AFTER THE LUNCHEON WHICH FOLLOWED, CHAMOUN SAID, "I HAVE BEEN TOLD TO ASK THE USG TO PUT SOME DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVES IN RESIDENCE ON THE CHRISTIAN SIDE OF THE LINE." IT WAS UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS A DEMARCHE ON FRANJIH'S BEHALF, BUT IT IS A REQUEST WHICH WAS ECHOED BY OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS THROUGHOUT OUR VISIT.

11. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH FRANJIH'S TONE WAS MORE ACERBIC AND ROUGH THAN THAT OF OUR OTHER INTERLOCUTORS, THE THEME OF HIS DISILLUSIONMENT WITH US ASSISTANCE WAS COMMON TO ALL OUR CONVERSATIONS. I HAVE NOT REPORTED MY REBUTTALS IN ORDER TO GIVE MAXIMUM FOCUS TO LEBANESE VIEWS.
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